

Kītāgiri Sutta

Confidence in the Triple Gem = *Saddhā* (ཅེ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་)

Whenever someone thinks about the Buddha's enlightenment, his teachings and his noble disciples, his mind is very pure, calm and happy. That is why Buddhism points out contemplating on the qualities of the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha are meditation techniques which can be used to concentrate mind. At that moment, mind doesn't have greed, anger or delusion, and also, at the same time mind has supreme happiness. Hence having the refuge of the triple gem brings us invaluable wealth because the main purpose of earning wealth is happiness. The confidence in the Buddha's enlightenment, his sublime teachings and his disciples are interrelated. If there is one, it influences others too. The center of these three things is the understanding of what the Buddha taught the path to overcome suffering. These three things give us a real refuge, protection and security to prevent our mind from negative thoughts which disturb our peace of mind. Buddhism says that all skills which should be practiced to attain nibbana depend on the confidence in the triple gem (*Saddhā mulikā sabbepi kusalā dhammā*). Confidence decides how far we are able to go on the path of peace of mind. Listening to dhamma and wise reflection according to what is listened help to increase confidence.

Having confidence in the Buddha, his teachings and his noble disciple leads to go forward on the path of liberation what the Buddha explained. Kītāgiri Sutta which comes in *Majjima Nikāya* (the Middle Length) describes how confidence in the triple gem (*Saddhā*) helps to achieve liberation. According to the discourse, confidence (or *saddhā*) plays a very essential role on the path of liberation what Buddhism points out. Here, the Buddha says; Bhikkhus, I do not say that final knowledge is achieved all at once. On the contrary, final knowledge is achieved by gradual training, by gradual progress, by gradual practice.

The Buddha first explains here the gradual procedure of Buddhist path. Final liberation is achieved by gradual training, gradual progress, and gradual practice.

1. One who is confident in a teacher visits him (*saddhā jāto upasamkamati*).
2. When he visits, he attends constantly the teacher (*upasmkamitvā pairupāsati*).
3. Then he lends ear (*pairupāsanto sotam odahati*).
4. And he listens to Dhamma (*ohitasoto dhamma sunāti*).
5. Having listened to Dhamma, he remembers what he learned (*sutvā dhamma dāreti*).
6. Further he reflects on its meaning (*datānam dhammānam attam upaparikkhati*).
7. While reflecting on the meaning, he gains a reflective acceptance of those teachings (*attham upaparikkhanto dhamma nijjhānā khamanti*).
8. With reflective acceptance he makes an effort (*dhammanijjhānākkhantiyā sati chando jāyati*).
9. Having made the effort he weights it up (*chandajāto ussahati*).

10. Next having weighted it up he attempts to go on the path (*ussahitvā tuletī*)

11. Being self-resolute he realizes with his person the highest truth itself (*ñāṇa* - knowledge) (*tulayitvā padayati*)

12. And, penetrating it by means of wisdom, he sees the supreme truth as it is (*pahitatto samāno kayena ceva paramasaccham sacchikaroti paññāya ca nam pativijjhā passati*).

Confidence in the triple gem helps who practices dhamma from the beginning to the end of the path of liberation. The triple gem is like a light which shines the path.

Material Gems are valuable things which bring happiness to people, but they give only some facilities to help this life. Sometimes material gems bring us fear, doubt, suffering, lamentation and pain. Also, those gems can't help us to overcome our suffering like aging, death and rebirth. Further, material gems can be stolen any time or destroyed. One day surely we have to leave them whether we like or not. **The triple gem, the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, are concerned in Buddhism as refuge to overcome all kinds of sufferings of beings.** Nobody can steal or destroy them. If we can get the real refuge by the triple gem, that refuge helps us in this life and in the entire Sansaric journey. That is why the threefold gem is called as priceless gems which help us to achieve real happiness. Confidence in the triple gem (*Saddhā*) leads to understand our lives and guides to overcome suffering. Also, confidence is the main root of all spiritual developments (*Saddhā mulikā sabbepi kusalā dhammā*). This confidence is the seed of wholesome acts (*Saddhā bijam*). **Contemplating on the triple gem purifies mind from negative thoughts such as craving, anger and delusion. Pure mind brings us happiness overcoming all sufferings.**

The first refuge that the Buddha means is the Buddha's enlightenment, the Dhamma illustrates the Buddha's teachings or doctrines, and the Sangha defines Buddha's noble disciples. Buddhists call these as the triple gem which are invaluable or priceless things in the world. That is why Buddhists wish kindly as "**May the Triple Gem Bless You**" when they meet a person. Buddhism invites intelligent beings to come and see this message. When a person hopes to practice the Buddha's message to get rid of suffering and overcome all sorrow and lamentation, it is easy to follow this teaching and get the results during this life itself if he or she has some sort of confidence in these three things at the very beginning. As much as this confidence increases, his all efforts that relate to liberation increase as well. It doesn't mean that someone needs this confidence forever. Although we have the confidence about this path, when we practice it, after we get the result, further it doesn't need faith or confidence because we have a complete understanding and the visible results. Then we can see it through our life and no more confidence or faith is required because of our own comprehension.

This confidence that comes in Buddhism about the three refuges is not just a blind faith. This is an understandable and intelligent confidence with proof. The Buddha says to the world very clearly that anybody can ask and search about his enlightenment, his teachings and his noble disciples. That is why Buddhism never says "*to come and believe*", and **Buddhism always says "*to come and see*".** That is the main difference in Buddhism.

These three refuges give us the protection or security not for this physical body but also a refuge preventing from falling into the hell and suffering. That is the great protection which anybody has. This great benefit can't be received from any other power in the world. However, as the result of practicing good we are able to overcome many difficulties and problems which come to our physical body too. We can especially control some bad results which come from previous bad actions.

The Buddha :-

When we mention the Buddha as a refuge, we contemplate on His enlightenment (*Saddhahati tathāgatassa bodhim*). As an enlightened, awakened spiritual teacher, the Buddha is considered that his understanding and discovery is true and if someone practices it, he or she can gain the result as much as he or she has effort. When the Buddha was alive, many people who listened to the Buddha's message said that "I go for refuge to the Lord Buddha". Therefore actually this is not a Buddha's declaration, but the Buddha's disciples' declaration. For an example, after listening to the Buddha's discourse, Brahmin Jānussoni said that '*I am going for refuge to the Buddha. I resort to him, follow and honor him*'. If someone comes to practice this message or gets the results from this message, it is not a benefit for Buddhism. It is a benefit to himself who comes because Buddhism is already highly appreciated by intelligent men, even deities and brahmas.

Especially we have to know here that we don't go for refuge to the Buddha's physical body. Here, we go for refuge to His enlightenment. We trust in His clear understanding, Buddhahood. The Buddha is the highest ideal of compassion and wisdom. As grateful people, we worship and respect to the Buddha in the name of peace of our mind even though he passed away, because the Buddha discovered the world reality and pointed out the cessation of suffering to the world kindly. This respect is not beneficial to the Buddha since he further doesn't live physically. However, here we consider the Buddha's enlightenment and his understanding. In addition, the Lord Buddha never hoped respect from his disciples for his physical body. He said very clearly that if you respect me, you may practice my message.

To increase our confidence in the Buddha, knowing his qualities is very important. Nobody can say the Buddha's all qualities and virtues in his entire life neither even by a Buddha during his whole lifetime. However, the Buddha's all qualities are included in a stanza. **Such, indeed, is the exalted one: Worthy (*Araham*), supremely enlightened (*Sammāsambuddho*), Endowed with knowledge and conduct (*Vijjācaranasampanno*), well gone (*Sugato*), Knower of the world (*Lokavidu*), Incomparable trainer of persons to be tamed (*Anuttaropurisadammasārathi*), Supreme teacher of gods and men (*Satthā devamanussanam*), Enlightened (*Buddho*) and Exalted (*Bhagavā*).** Understanding these qualities leads to develop confidence in the Buddhahood and go on the path of liberation.

The Buddha is neither a god nor an incarnation of a god. The Buddha was born in India as an ordinary human being 2600 years ago. At the age of thirty-five he attained enlightenment. After that he was not further an ordinary being and he became a supreme human being who, through his own effort, attained to the final bliss of liberation and perfect wisdom and became the peerless teacher of deities and

men. Also he encouraged his disciples to see him through practicing his noble message. He says, he who sees Dhamma sees me (*Yo dhammam passati so mam passati*). Further the Buddha says; he who sees the dependent origination sees the dhamma (*Yo paticcasamuppadam passati so dhamma passati*). Hence, the foundation of knowing the dhamma as well as the Buddha is understanding the dependent origination. It means understanding impermanence which means when conditions are together, experience arises, and when conditions detached, the experience ceases without remaining anything. This is the theory that Buddha explains as **Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) will not come to (the future) occurrence** (අනුන්වා සම්භවං හුන්වා න භවිස්සති). The foundation of the ultimate truth is the dependent origination which is the central theory in Buddhism. Understanding the dependent origination leads to realize the four noble truth and to get rid of suffering.

After 45 years of a great service to the heaven and human world as a Buddha, at the age of eighty, he passed away not to be reborn (*parinirvana*). Even though he passed away, his disciples mention that his teachings are still alive. The Buddha also advised his disciples not to consider this message as a message of a deceased teacher. Until the Buddha's teachings are being practiced by the courageous beings, the Buddha is live because we can see him through practicing this message.

The Buddha says very clearly that he is not a savior or deliverer, and he can rescue nobody, he is only a teacher or guide who preaches the path of liberation from all kinds of sufferings. Going along the path is the duty of disciples and followers. However, the Buddha always explained the message that he discovered and practiced to the world and encouraged his disciples kindly to overcome suffering as soon as they are able.

The Dhamma :-

The Dhamma, the Buddha's teachings that the Buddha discovered and preached to the world is also concerned as a refuge. The disciples of the Buddha trust in the Buddha's teachings as the real path to overcome suffering. The dhamma that the Buddha delivered is not a doctrine of revelation but the teaching of enlightenment based on the clear comprehension of actuality. Also any courageous person can practice and see the same result that other enlightened ones gained as his own experience.

There is a very especial thing that even though the Lord Buddha discovered this path himself without any help from others, this message doesn't belong to him either. Whether a Buddha appears or not in the world, this is the world reality and it is in the world forever. When a Buddha appears in the world, he discovers this reality for the first time in this period. If a Buddha doesn't appear, ordinary beings can't understand this reality by their own understanding as this reality is covered by deep ignorance. We respect the Buddha because he realized this world reality for the first time in this period and preached it to men and deities. Here it is important to contemplate on the qualities of the Dhamma. **The Dhamma is well expounded by the Blessed One, directly visible, immediately effective, inviting one to come and see, leading onwards, to be personally experienced by the wise."**

The Buddha's all teachings can be included into two levels that the teachings which cause to be born in heaven and human worlds and, the teachings which cause to get rid of suffering and attain final bliss of liberation, enlightenment or *Nirvana*.

When the Lord Buddha preached His teachings, He considered the listeners' intelligence. And He has an order in His speech which is generosity, virtue, renunciation etc. First, The Buddha normally preached the path of reaching heaven and human worlds because the biggest risk is the ability to fall into hell in the next life. Hence, the Buddha preached the three meritorious deeds which are the importance of practicing generosity, morality and meditation to overcome rebirth in the hell. When someone practices this path, he or she can gain happiness in this life itself. The Buddha says clearly that practicing merits means gaining happiness. If someone has done a lot of meritorious deeds in his or her life it means he or she has accumulated a lot of happiness in his life. This behavior causes happiness not only hereafter but in this short life itself. When we fulfill these three meritorious deeds, our mind is pure and calm. That pure mind can gain us longevity, good complexion, comfort, strength and finally happiness. When someone always does wholesome acts in his life, deities and departed relatives also bless his life. All of these meritorious deeds cause to be reborn in the heaven or human world developing spirituality on the behalf of real happiness.

The second level of the Buddha's teaching is the path for getting rid of all kinds of sufferings and to overcome *Sansaric* journey. Here the Buddha has pointed out three disciplines which are virtue, concentration (or tranquility) and wisdom. For this path, first we have to be qualified for the knowledge about impermanence (*Anicca*) and the dependent origination (*paticca samuppada*). If we have a clear knowledge about arising and ceasing about five aggregates, we are ready to practice this path perseveringly. Here, only knowledge is not enough, but reflection (*Yoniso manasikara*) and practicing (*Dhammanudhamma patipatti*) are also important according to the knowledge. When we practice this path, we can see the results as much as we practice. Visible result is the one of the results practicing this teaching.

The Sangha :-

Furthermore, we go to the Sangha for refuge. Sangha means the Buddha's noble disciples who attained and are attaining the levels of enlightenment from mundane level to supra-mundane level. The Sangha includes not only monks but also nuns and lay persons who attained and are attaining enlightenment. When we go to the Sangha for refuge, our courage and faith increase a lot and, it is a good motivation to fulfill this message. If we know that there are persons who get the results by practicing this message in the world, then we have confidence to go forward with courage to see the results within our life time.

If someone always lives practicing these three refuges in his life, he or she has a lot of things to be happy. Then his or her all other wealth is not valuable like this because he or she has received the most valuable gem in the world. He or she does all activities giving priority to these three things. During the

day, the memory about three refuges comes his mind a lot of times. Negative thoughts and defilements have no chance to come to mind and disturb to the peace of mind. Even though he or she receives the ownership of the whole world, he doesn't care. Every moment he lives with supreme happiness reaching final bliss of liberation dealing with the three refuges. And every moment he or she practices the fourfold mindfulness in the name of getting rid of sorrow and lamentation, purification of beings and liberation from all kinds of suffering. Here, his energy to face big challenges such as old age, sickness, death and separation from all interests increases strongly. He can live without sorrow and lamentation in front of old age, sickness, death and separation. Even though we are rich and well educated, we can never face these challenges without suffering except practicing this real path. If we know this path, we are so lucky. If we can reflect on it every moment, we are luckier and, if we can gain complete understanding about the appearing and ceasing in five aggregates (matter, feeling, perception, mental formation and mind) seeing impermanence continuously, we are the luckiest people in the heaven as well as in the human world.

It is so beneficial to listen to the Buddha's message again and again for the clear knowledge to grow this confidence strong about the three refuges and to go forward on the path of purification. Here, it is very important to listen to the main doctrines in Buddhism as the Four Noble Truths, The Fourfold Mindfulness, The Dependent Origination, The Three Characteristics, The Five Spiritual Faculties and The Eightfold Path. More we develop our knowledge, more we clear our vision and understanding. It is very useful to go forward on the path of purification seeing the impermanence. By contemplating on the qualities of the triple gems we are inspired and encouraged to go forward on the path of liberation. Also, reflecting on qualities of the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha are meditation techniques those can be used to train our mind for mindfulness which leads to concentration. When mind is concentrated, the world reality (or wisdom) is discovered as it is. Hence, the triple gems can be used as a refuge, meditation and a motivation on the path of enlightenment.

As the result of increasing the confidence in the triple gem according to the Buddha's advice, the five spiritual faculties like confidence, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom gradually develop. This is the real wealth in our lives. Improving these five things is the real success in our lives.



May the Triple Gem Bless you!

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May all beings be well happy and peaceful!

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(Tuesday Dhamma Discussion of Los Angeles Buddhist Vihara in Pasadena. 05/08/2018)